

HE PASA EKKLESIA.

AN ORIGINAL HISTORY

OF THE

RELIGIOUS DENOMINATIONS

1844

AT PRESENT EXISTING IN

THE UNITED STATES.

CONTAINING AUTHENTIC ACCOUNTS OF THEIR

RISE, PROGRESS, STATISTICS AND DOCTRINES.

WRITTEN EXPRESSLY FOR THE WORK BY EMINENT

THEOLOGICAL PROFESSORS, MINISTERS, AND LAY-MEMBERS,

OF THE RESPECTIVE DENOMINATIONS.

PROJECTED, COMPILED AND ARRANGED BY

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1844.

LATTER DAY SAINTS.

BY JOSEPH SMITH,
NAUVOO, ILLINOIS.

THE Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, was founded upon direct revelation, as the true church of God has ever been, according to the scriptures (Amos, iii. 7, and Acts i. 2.) And through the will and blessings of God, I have been an instrument in his hands, thus far, to move forward the cause of Zion. Therefore, in order to fulfil the solicitation of your letter of July last, I shall commence with my life.

I was born in the town of Sharon, Windsor county, Vermont, on the 23d of December, A. D. 1805. When ten years old, my parents removed to Palmyra, New York, where we resided about four years, and from thence we removed to the town of Manchester, a distance of six miles.

My father was a farmer, and taught me the art of husbandry. When about fourteen years of age, I began to reflect upon the importance of being prepared for a future state; and upon inquiring the place of salvation, I found that there was a great clash in religious sentiment; if I went to one society they referred me to one place, and another to another; each one pointing to his own particular creed as the "summum bonum" of perfection. Considering that all could not be right, and that God could not be the author of so much confusion, I determined to investigate the subject more fully, believing that if God had a church, it would not be split up into factions, and that if he taught one society to worship one way, and administer in one set of ordinances, he would not teach another principles which were diametrically opposed. Believing the word of God, I had confidence in the declaration of James, "If any man lack wisdom let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him."

I retired to a secret place in a grove, and began to call upon the

Lord. While fervently engaged in supplication, my mind was taken away from the objects with which I was surrounded, and I was entrapt in a heavenly vision, and saw two glorious personages, who exactly resembled each other in features and likeness, surrounded with a brilliant light, which eclipsed the sun at noonday. They told me that all the religious denominations were believing in incorrect doctrines, and that none of them was acknowledged of God as his church and kingdom. And I was expressly commanded to "go not after them," at the same time receiving a promise that the fulness of the gospel should at some future time be made known unto me.

On the evening of the 21st September, A. D. 1823, while I was praying unto God and endeavouring to exercise faith in the precious promises of scripture, on a sudden a light like that of day, only of a far purer and more glorious appearance and brightness, burst into the room; indeed the first sight was as though the house was filled with consuming fire. The appearance produced a shock that affected the whole body. In a moment a personage stood before me surrounded with a glory yet greater than that with which I was already surrounded. This messenger proclaimed himself to be an angel of God, sent to bring the joyful tidings, that the covenant which God made with ancient Israel was at hand to be fulfilled; that the preparatory work for the second coming of the Messiah was speedily to commence; that the time was at hand for the gospel in all its fulness to be preached in power, unto all nations, that a people might be prepared for the millennial reign.

I was informed that I was chosen to be an instrument in the hands of God to bring about some of his purposes in this glorious dispensation.

I was informed also concerning the aboriginal inhabitants of this country, and shown who they were, and from whence they came;—a brief sketch of their origin, progress, civilization, laws, governments, of their righteousness and iniquity, and the blessings of God being finally withdrawn from them as a people, was made known unto me. I was also told where there was deposited some plates, on which was engraven an abridgment of the records of the ancient prophets that had existed on this continent. The angel appeared to me three times the same night and unfolded the same things. After having received many visits from the angels of God, unfolding the majesty and glory of the events that should transpire in the last days, on the morning of the 22d of September, A. D. 1827, the angel of the Lord delivered the records into my hands.

These records were engraven on plates which had the appearance of gold; each plate was six inches wide and eight inches long, and

not quite so thick as common tin. They were filled with engravings in Egyptian characters, and bound together in a volume, as the leaves of a book, with three rings running through the whole. The volume was something near six inches in thickness, a part of which was sealed. The characters on the unsealed part were small and beautifully engraved. The whole book exhibited many marks of antiquity in its construction, and much skill in the art of engraving. With the records was found a curious instrument which the ancients called "Urim and Thummim," which consisted of two transparent stones set in the rim on a bow fastened to a breastplate.

Through the medium of the Urim and Thummim I translated the record, by the gift and power of God.

In this important and interesting book the history of ancient America is unfolded, from its first settlement by a colony that came from the tower of Babel, at the confusion of languages, to the beginning of the fifth century of the Christian era.

We are informed by these records, that America, in ancient times, has been inhabited by two distinct races of people. The first were called Jaredites, and came directly from the tower of Babel. The second race came directly from the city of Jerusalem, about six hundred years before Christ. They were principally Israelites, of the descendants of Joseph. The Jaredites were destroyed, about the time that the Israelites came from Jerusalem, who succeeded them in the inheritance of the country. The principal nation of the second race fell in battle towards the close of the fourth century. The remnant are the Indians who now inhabit this country. This book also tells us that our Saviour made his appearance upon this continent after his resurrection; that he planted the gospel here in all its fulness, and richness, and power, and blessing; that they had apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, and evangelists; the same order, the same priesthood, the same ordinances, gifts, powers, and blessing, as was enjoyed on the eastern continent; that the people were cut off in consequence of their transgressions; that the last of their prophets who existed among them was commanded to write an abridgment of their prophecies, history, &c., and to hide it up in the earth, and that it should come forth and be united with the Bible, for the accomplishment of the purposes of God, in the last days. For a more particular account, I would refer to the Book of Mormon, which can be purchased at Nauvoo, or from any of our travelling elders.

As soon as the news of this discovery was made known, false reports, misrepresentation and slander flew, as on the wings of the wind, in every direction; my house was frequently beset by mobs,

and evil designing persons; several times I was shot at, and very narrowly escaped, and every device was made use of to get the plates away from me; but the power and blessing of God attended me, and several began to believe my testimony.

On the 6th April, 1830, the "Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints," was first organized, in the town of Manchester, Ontario Co., State of New York. Some few were called and ordained by the Spirit of revelation and prophecy, and began to preach as the Spirit gave them utterance, and though weak, yet were they strengthened by the power of God; and many were brought to repentance, were immersed in the water, and were filled with the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands. They saw visions and prophesied, devils were cast out, and the sick healed by the laying on of hands. From that time the work rolled forth with astonishing rapidity, and churches were soon formed in the States of New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Missouri; in the last named state a considerable settlement was formed in Jackson county; numbers joined the church, and we were increasing rapidly; we made large purchases of land, our farms teemed with plenty, and peace and happiness were enjoyed in our domestic circle and throughout our neighbourhood; but as we could not associate with our neighbours,—who were, many of them, of the basest of men, and had fled from the face of civilized society to the frontier country, to escape the hand of justice—in their midnight revels, their sabbath-breaking, horse-racing, and gambling, they commenced at first to ridicule, then to persecute, and finally an organized mob assembled and burned our houses, tarred and feathered and whipped many of our brethren, and finally drove them from their habitations; these, houseless and homeless, contrary to law, justice, and humanity, had to wander on the bleak prairies till the children left the tracks of their blood on the prairie. This took place in the month of November, and they had no other covering but the canopy of heaven, in that inclement season of the year. This proceeding was winked at by the government; and although we had warrantee deeds for our land, and had violated no law, we could obtain no redress. There were many sick who were thus inhumanly driven from their houses, and had to endure all this abuse, and to seek homes where they could be found. The result was, that a great many of them being deprived of the comforts of life, and the necessary attendance, died; many children were left orphans; wives, widows; and husbands, widowers. Our farms were taken possession of by the mob, many thousands of cattle, sheep, horses, and hogs were taken, and our household goods, store goods, and printing press and types were broken, taken, or otherwise destroyed.

Many of our brethren removed to Clay county, where they continued until 1836 (three years); there was no violence offered, but there were threatenings of violence. But in the summer of 1836 these threatenings began to assume a more serious aspect; from threats, public meetings were called, resolutions were passed, vengeance and destruction were threatened, and affairs again assumed a fearful attitude; Jackson county was a sufficient precedent, and as the authorities in that county did not interfere, they boasted that they would not in this; which on application to the authorities we found to be too true; and, after much violence, privation, and loss of property, we were again driven from our homes.

We next settled in Caldwell and Davies counties, where we made large and extensive settlements, thinking to free ourselves from the power of oppression by settling in new counties, with a very few inhabitants in them; but here we were not allowed to live in peace; and in 1838 were again attacked by mobs; an exterminating order was issued by Governor Boggs, and under the sanction of law, an organized banditti ravaged the country, robbing us of our cattle, sheep, horses, hogs, &c.; many of our people were murdered in cold blood, the chastity of our women was violated, and we were forced to sign away our property at the point of the sword; and after enduring every indignity that could be heaped upon us by an inhuman, ungodly band of marauders,—from twelve to fifteen thousand souls, men, women, and children, were driven from their own firesides, and from lands for which they had warrantee deeds, to wander houseless, friendless, and homeless, (in the depth of winter,) as exiles on the earth, or to seek an asylum in a more genial clime, and among a less barbarous people.

Many sickened and died in consequence of the cold and hardships they had to endure, many wives were left widows, and children orphans and destitute.

It would take more time than I am able to devote to your service, at present, to describe the injustice, the wrongs, the murders, the bloodshed, thefts, misery and wo that have been committed upon our people by the barbarous, inhuman, and lawless proceedings of the State of Missouri. And I would refer you, and the readers of your history who may be desirous of further information on this topic, to the evidence taken on my recent trial before the Municipal Court of Nauvoo, on Saturday, July 1st, 1843, on a writ of habeas corpus, which is published in pamphlet form by Messrs. Taylor & Woodruff, of this city.

After being thus inhumanly expelled by the government and people from Missouri, we found an asylum and friends in the State of

Illinois. Here, in the fall of 1839, we commenced a city called Nauvoo, in Hancock county, which, in December, 1840, received an act of incorporation from the Legislature of Illinois, and is endowed with as liberal powers as any city in the United States. Nauvoo, in every respect, connected with increase and prosperity, has exceeded the most sanguine expectations of thousands. It now contains near 1500 houses, and more than 15,000 inhabitants. The charter contains, amongst its important powers, privileges, or immunities, a grant for the "University of Nauvoo," with the same liberal powers of the city; where all the arts and sciences will grow with the growth, and strengthen the strength of this beloved city of the "saints of the last days." Another very commendatory provision of the charter is, that that portion of the citizens subject to military duty are organized into a body of independent military men, styled the "Nauvoo Legion," whose highest officer holds the rank, and is commissioned lieutenant-general. This legion, like other independent bodies of troops in this republican government, is at the disposal of the Governor of this State, and President of the United States. There is also an act of incorporation for an agricultural and manufacturing association, as well as the Nauvoo House Association.

The temple of God, now in the course of erection, being already raised one story, and which is 120 feet by 80 feet, of stone, with polished pilasters, of an entire new order of architecture, will be a splendid house for the worship of God, as well as an unique wonder for the world, it being built by the direct revelation of Jesus Christ for the salvation of the living and the dead.

Since the organization of this church its progress has been rapid, and its gain in numbers regular. Besides these United States, where nearly every place of notoriety has heard the glad tidings of the gospel of the Son of God, England, Ireland, and Scotland, have shared largely in the fulness of the everlasting gospel, and thousands have already gathered with their kindred saints, to this the cornerstone of Zion. Missionaries of this church have gone to the East Indies, to Australia, Germany, Constantinople, Egypt, Palestine, the Islands of the Pacific, and are now preparing to open the door in the extensive dominions of Russia.

There are no correct data by which the exact number of members composing this now extensive, and still extending, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints can be known. Should it be supposed at 150,000, it might still be short of the truth.

Believing the Bible to say what it means and mean what it says; and guided by revelation according to the ancient order of the fathers

to whom came what little light we enjoy ; and circumscribed only by the eternal limits of truth : this church must continue the even tenor of her way, and " spread undivided, and operate unspent."

We believe in God the Eternal Father, and in his son Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost.

We believe that men will be punished for their own sins and not for Adam's transgression.

We believe that through the atonement of Christ all men may be saved by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel.

We believe that these ordinances are: 1st, Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ ; 2d, Repentance ; 3d, Baptism by immersion for the remission of sins ; 4th, Laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost.

We believe that a man must be called of God by " prophecy, and by laying on of hands," by those who are in authority to preach the gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof.

We believe in the same organization that existed in the primitive church, viz. apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, evangelists, &c.

We believe in the gift of tongues, prophecy, revelation, visions, healing, interpretation of tongues, &c.

We believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly ; we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God.

We believe all that God has revealed, all that he does now reveal, and we believe that he will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

We believe in the literal gathering of Israel, and in the restoration of the Ten Tribes. That Zion will be built upon this continent. That Christ will reign personally upon the earth, and that the earth will be renewed and receive its paradisal glory.

We claim the privilege of worshipping Almighty God according to the dictates of our conscience, and allow all men the same privilege, let them worship how, where, or what they may.

We believe in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers, and magistrates ; in obeying, honouring, and sustaining the law.

We believe in being honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and in doing good to all men ; indeed we may say that we follow the admonition of Paul; " we believe all things : we hope all things :" we have endured many things, and hope to be able to endure all things. If there is any thing virtuous, lovely, or of good report, or praiseworthy, we seek thereafter.